



STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE LIFE-SKILLS AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract:

Adolescence is the period of developmental transition between childhood and adulthood, involving multiple physical, intellectual, personality, and social developmental changes. We can observe high risk behaviour among the adolescents. Due to rapid growth and changes they will fall in confusion and imbalance stage. This is a transition period. Adolescence is thus a turning point in one's life, a period of increased potential but also one of greater vulnerability. So they need proper guidance and orientation. As today's adolescents are the tomorrow's adults, we should understand them in all aspects and need to inculcate Life Skills among the growing minds. Life Skills are essentially those abilities that help promote overall wellbeing and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. Life Skills enable any one to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities. Life Skills education involves a dynamic teaching process. Method followed in teaching of Life Skills ought to be builds upon the social learning theory and on what we know of how young people learn from their environment; from observing how others behave and what consequences arise from behaviour. This paper focuses on the key issues and concerns of Adolescent Students, importance of Life Skills education to the Adolescents and Approach and Techniques to impart Life Skills.

Keywords: adolescents, life skills, approach and techniques to impart life skills

1. Introduction

World Health Organization (WHO) defines that individuals in the age group of 10-19 are known as adolescents and this period/stage of human is Adolescence. Adolescence, a vital stage of growth and development in humans and it marks the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. It is characterized by rapid physiological

changes and psychosocial maturation. Adolescence is also the stage when young people extend their relationships beyond parents and family and are intensely influenced by their peers and the outside world in general. As adolescents mature cognitively, their mental process becomes more analytical. They are now capable of abstract thinking, better articulation and of developing an independent ideology. These are truly the years of creativity, idealism, buoyancy and a spirit of adventure. But these are also the years of experimentation and risk-taking, of giving in to negative peer pressure, of taking uninformed decisions on crucial issues, especially relating to their bodies and their sexuality. The following are the key issues and concerns of Adolescent Students. As a Teachers, Parents, Brothers and Sisters of the Adolescent we should know these issues:

- **Developing an Identity**

Self-awareness helps adolescents to understand themselves and establish their personal identity. Lack of information and skills prevent them from effectively exploring their potential and establishing a positive image and sound career perspective.

- **Managing Emotions**

Adolescents have frequent mood changes reflecting feelings of anger, sadness, happiness, fear, shame, guilt, and love. Very often, they are unable to understand the emotional turmoil. They do not have a supportive environment in order to share their concerns with others. Counselling facilities are not available in most of the institutions.

- **Building Relationships**

As a part of growing up, adolescents redefine their relationships with parents, peers and members of the opposite sex. Adults have high expectations from them and do not understand their feelings. Adolescents need social skills for building positive and healthy relationships with others including peer of opposite sex. They need to understand the importance of mutual respect and socially defined boundaries of every relationship.

- **Resisting Peer Pressure**

Adolescents find it difficult to resist peer pressure. Some of them may yield to these pressures and engage in experimentation. Aggressive self-conduct; irresponsible behaviour and substance abuse involve greater risks with regard to physical and mental health. The experiment with smoking and milder drugs can lead to switching over to hard drugs and addiction at a later stage.

- **Acquiring Information, Education and Services on issues of Adolescence**

Exposure to media and mixed messages from the fast changing world has left adolescents with many unanswered questions. The widening gap in communication between adolescents and parents is a matter of great concern. Teachers still feel inhibited to discuss issues frankly and sensitively. Adolescents seek information from

their peer group who are also ill informed and some may fall prey to quacks. Fear and hesitation prevents them from seeking knowledge on preventive methods and medical.

- **Communicating and Negotiating safer life situations**

Sexually active adolescents face greater health risks. Girls may also face mental and emotional problems related to early sexual initiation. Resist the vulnerability to drug abuse, violence and conflict with the law and the society.

Adolescence is thus a turning point in one's life, a period of increased potential but also one of greater vulnerability. As today's adolescents are the tomorrow's adults, we should understand them in all aspects and need to inculcate Life Skills among the growing minds. Life Skills enable any one to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities. It will lead to Skilled India.

2. Life Skills

Life Skills are the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO). '*Adaptive*' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. '*Positive behaviour*' implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions.

According to WHO there are ten core Life Skills. They are: Self-awareness, Empathy, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Decision making, Problem Solving, Effective communication, Interpersonal relationship, Coping with stress and Coping with emotion.

Life Skills are essentially those abilities that help promote overall wellbeing and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. They are the beginning of wisdom which focuses on behaviour change or developmental approach designed to address a balance of three areas- knowledge, attitude and skills. These Life Skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitude and values into actual abilities.

We all use Life Skills in different situations such as: To negotiate effectively at home, school or work place, we need to have thinking skills as well as social skills; and when faced with difficult situations we tend to think critically, to analyse all the pros and cons of the situation to think out of box to find a solution to seemingly difficult problems.

Life Skills include Psychosocial competencies and Interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Essentially, there are two kinds of skills - those related to thinking termed as 'thinking skills'; and skills

related to dealing with others termed as 'social skills'. While thinking skills relate to reflection at a personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills and do not necessarily depend on logical thinking. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behaviour and negotiating effectively.

'Emotional' can be perceived as a skill not only in making rational decisions but also in being able to make others agree to one's point of view. To do that, coming to terms first with oneself is important. Thus, self-management is an important skill including managing/coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure. Young people as advocates need both 'thinking' and 'social skills' for consensus building and advocacy on issues of concern.

3. Benefits of Life Skills

Imparting life skill education in children and adolescents will bring valuable benefits which include

- Promotion of self-esteem, peace education, self-confidence etc.
- Prevention of antisocial activities and behaviour.
- Helps in the promotion of general well-being and primary prevention.
- Life Skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities and enable individuals to behave in healthy ways, given the desire to do so and given the scope and opportunity to do so.
- Results of research studies also prove that life skill education improves the academic performance of individuals.

4. Need for Life Skills

Life Skills are many factors such as social support, culture and environment that affect motivation and ability to behave in positive ways. Effective acquisition and application of Life Skills can influence the way one feels about others, ourselves and will equally influence the way we are perceived by others. It contributes to perception of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Life Skills training is an efficacious tool for empowering the youth to act responsibly, take initiative and take control. It should be based on when young people are able to rise emotional impasses arising from daily conflicts, entangled relationships and peer pressure, they are less likely to resort to anti-social or high risk behaviours.

The Life Skills school based programme where Life Skills are imparted would be in a supportive learning environment. That would be applicable to all adolescents in a school. Training should cover the age group of 10-18 adolescent years, since young

people of this age group seem to be most vulnerable to behaviour related health problems. This would promote the health and well-being of targeted adolescent group of children.

5. Imparting Life Skills among Adolescents

Many Life Skills are required to manage a particular situation effectively. In a way, various Life Skills work best in conjunction. In fact, the appropriate combination of Life Skills in a given moment is an art. Children learn their Life Skills from parents, teachers and significant others who act as their role model. They gradually learn to use a particular skill effectively in diverse situation to cope with challenges of life.

Life Skills education involves a dynamic teaching process. The methods used to facilitate this active involvement. Method followed in teaching of Life Skills ought to be builds upon the social learning theory and on what we know of how young people learn from their environment; from observing how others behave and what consequences arise from behaviour.

Any method should involve the process of Participatory learning using 4 basic components:

1. Practical activities
2. Feedback and reflections
3. Consolidation and reinforcement
4. Practical application to day to day life challenges

6. Peer Educators Approach

Peer Educators Approach is one of the best approaches to impart Life Skill Education. This approach, involves one teacher and 3-4 student representatives from each school (forming the core Life Skills team) at the school. They learn these skills through active learning and participation in a 6 session inter school training workshop programme. They further train their peers at school in these skills through the same process. They follow up with the main resource team for feedback, discussions, training material etc.

Each workshop is specially designed to impart a particular skill and involves all or some of the techniques such as: Class discussions, Brainstorming, Demonstration and guided practice, Role plays, Audio and visual activities e.g., arts, music, theatre, dance, Small groups, Educational games and simulations, Situational Analysis and Case studies, Storytelling, Debates, Decision mapping or problem trees.

7. Process to be followed while using the above techniques to impart Life Skills Education

Class discussions:

- Decide how to arrange seating for discussion
- Identify the goal of the discussion and communicate it clearly
- Pose meaningful, open-ended questions.
- Keep track of discussion progress
- Brainstorming
- Designate a leader and a recorder
- State the issue or problem and ask for ideas
- Students may suggest any idea that comes to mind
- Do not discuss the ideas when they are first suggested
- Record ideas in a place where everyone can see them
- After brainstorming, review the ideas and add, delete, categorise
- Role plays
- Describe the situation to be role played
- Select role players
- Give instructions to role players
- Start the role play
- Discuss what happened
- Small groups
- State the purpose of discussion and the amount of time available
- Form small groups
- Position seating so that members can hear each other easily
- Ask group to appoint recorder
- At the end have recorder describe the group's discussion
- Educational games and simulations

Games: Remind students that the activity is meant to be enjoyable and that it does not matter who wins

8. Simulations

- Work best when they are brief and discussed immediately
- Students should be asked to imagine themselves in a situation or should play a structured game of activity to experience a feeling that might occur in another setting
- Situational Analysis and Case studies

- Guiding questions are useful to spur thinking and discussion
- Facilitator must be adept at teasing out the key points and step back and pose some bigger' overarching questions
- Teacher must act as the facilitator and coach rather than the sole source of 'answer' and knowledge.
- Storytelling
- Keep the story simple and clear. Make one or two main points.
- Be sure the story (and pictures, if included) relate to the lives of the students.
- Make the story dramatic enough to be interesting. Try to include situations of happiness, sadness, excitement, courage, serious thought, decisions, and problem solving behaviours.
- Debates
- Allow students to take positions of their choosing if too many students take the same position, ask for volunteers to take the opposing point of view
- Provide students with time to research their topic.
- Do not allow students to dominate at the expenses of other speakers.
- Make certain that students show request for the opinions and thoughts of other debates. Maintain control in the classroom and keep the debate on topic.

9. Conclusion

Education system plays a proactive role in Life Skills development among learners. Any program to reach the adolescents has to be incorporated into the educational system to be feasible, effective, and cost-effective. In a country like ours, where resources and trained professionals are sparse and few, it is more be practical to involve and work with the teachers. The teachers are the personnel who interact with the adolescents closely. They could be trained to transfer these skills to the adolescents. Imparting life skill training through inculcating life skill education will help our adolescents to overcome such difficulties in life. Life skill education can serve as a remedy for the problems as it helps the adolescents to lead a better life. There for life skill education is a need of the society and every education system should impart life skill education as a part of its curriculum as it is capable of producing positive health behavior, positive interpersonal relationships and well-being of individuals. There is also need to integrate an approach to provide opportunities of experiential learning to them especially adolescent. Peer Educators Approach needs to be integrated right from the stage of curriculum development to syllabi and materials development, transaction of materials, organization of learning experiences and evaluation in order to build the Skill India by imparting Life Skill Education to the adolescents.

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